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A Santel Communications Company

August 14, 2001

The Honorable Tim Johnson
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Senator Johnson:

Information I have received deals with the Federal Communications Commission and their move to reallocate wireless radio spectrum in the MDS/MMDS bands to provide more bandwidth for 3G PCS mobile service.

Our company operates an MMDS wireless system that delivers television to rural communities and wireless broadband Internet services in a radius area of thirty-five miles from the tower. The frequencies I am concerned about are the 2.5 Gigahertz MMDS/ITFS bands that are used for transmission of television signals and high-speed data services including Internet service. The 2.1 Gigahertz MDS band is used for the broadband return path to the tower. If the FCC reallocates the fore mentioned spectrums, what will happen to services rural residents are using today?

What happened to all of the hype in the last several years over the so-called digital divide and the haves and the have nots? There seems to be a concern everywhere about the rural areas and how nobody feels they should fall behind the populated portions of the country. How can a move like this help rural South Dakota? Will the rug be pulled out from under the rural people that are now using these services in the name of a technology (3G), that will not be feasible in the rural areas of South Dakota for many years to come, if ever?

We have deployed DSL services in all ten of our exchanges knowing it will never pay for itself. This is just expected of a telecommunications company. Part of the problem stems from the small town South Dakotan, who just cannot afford it. Nobody wants to talk about this fact, but it is true in more cases than not.

As we replace buried cable that has reached its maximus service life with optical fiber, broadband service will slowly become a reality in the rural areas. This is a very large project and broadband service is extremely expensive even for a RUS borrower. Our company covers two thousand square miles. The wireless broadband service deployment gave us the ability to serve rural residents not only in our service area, but to offer a competitive broadband service in areas served by other companies that have not deployed broadband to all of the rural area..

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to you, Senator Johnson, for allowing me to express my views on the current move by the Federal Communications Commission to reallocate radio spectrum to serve the large metro areas at the expense of the rural resident.

Sincerely,

Gene Kroell,
General Manager

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